



City of Grand Rapids

Boys & Girls Clubs of Grand Rapids Youth Commonwealth partners with Grand Rapids Police Department on Pathways to Policing

Career exploration program for area youth doubles as minority recruitment initiative for police

08/21/17: GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – Boys & Girls Clubs of Grand Rapids Youth Commonwealth has partnered with the Grand Rapids Police Department on Pathways to Policing, a mentoring and training program that will provide club members and alumni a way to explore career opportunities in law enforcement, specifically within GRPD. The program is set to launch this fall.

“Grand Rapids Police officers have been a steadfast presence and have provided positive role models for thousands of kids in our clubs since GRPD Superintendent Frank O’Malley founded the clubs in 1938,” explained Boys & Girls Clubs of Grand Rapids executive director, Rick Huisman. “While many of our members have expressed interest in law enforcement careers, we’ve not provided the resources or direction for them to explore the opportunity in the past. Pathways to Policing will give these young people a clear path to explore their interests.”

The program, open at no cost to Boys & Girls Clubs of Grand Rapids members and alumni ages 13-20, will be led by club staff and GRPD officers and will include mentoring, hands-on training, test preparation, interview skill development and life skill development.

In addition to serving as a career exploration program for participating youth, it will serve as a recruitment initiative for GRPD.

“The Grand Rapids Police Department and the City of Grand Rapids have a strong commitment to building a more diverse police department – one that is reflective of the community we serve,” said Grand Rapids Police Chief, David Rahinsky. “As part of this effort, it’s critically important that we reach out directly to young people and encourage them to consider careers with the department.”

The partnership between GRPD and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Grand Rapids is a natural fit because officers are already in the clubs, connecting with members in a meaningful way on a daily basis.

“The kids and officers know each other. We’ll be building on a foundation of trust,” said Rahinsky.



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Pathways to Policing is predicated on research that suggests that recruitment efforts rooted in pre-existing positive relationships between police and residents are more likely to be successful.

“That’s exactly why the Boys & Girls Clubs of Grand Rapids is so well suited to partner with the Grand Rapids Police Department on this innovative recruitment initiative,” said Huisman.

Pathways to Policing is the first program of its kind in the U.S. emanating from a partnership between a local police department and a Boys & Girls Club.

The Frey Foundation of Grand Rapids is a key funder of this new program. “Frey Foundation trustees were excited to support this initiative,” said Steven M. Wilson, president of the Frey Foundation. “Pathways to Policing will provide area youth exposure to a viable career pathway into public service. It also holds promise to strengthen relationships between GRPD and the communities it serves and to diversify the pipeline of law enforcement professionals in Grand Rapids. Trustees and staff of the foundation view this as a multi-win initiative for children and the West Michigan community and look forward to sharing what is learned from the program.”

The initial cohort will begin early this fall and will run in two consecutive six-week program cycles. Participants will complete the Civil Service Test at the end of week six. The second six-week cohort will prepare participants for mock interviews conducted by GRPD personnel and modeled on the interview process employed with potential GRPD officer candidates.

Boys & Girls Club of Grand Rapids members and alumni interested in the Pathways to Policing program should contact Nikki Outhier at nouthier@bgcgrandrapids.org or 616-233-9370, x 111, for more information.

About Boys & Girls Clubs of Grand Rapids Youth Commonwealth

Boys & Girls Clubs of Grand Rapids enables young people to reach their full potential as responsible citizens through education, recreation and other positive experiences in partnership with the Grand Rapids Police Department. The clubs offer a comfortable, nurturing space and provide after school opportunities for children to nurture their talents, receive regular mentoring and develop friendships. Progressive programming emphasizes academic success, character and leadership development, career development and healthy lifestyles.

About the Grand Rapids Police Department

Established in 1871, the Grand Rapids Police Department has grown to become the second largest police department in the State of Michigan. Staffed by 292 uniformed personnel, as well as 73 dedicated civilian employees, the department handles approximately 150,000 calls for service a year in a city with a population of almost 195,000.



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About Frey Foundation

Frey Foundation, based in Grand Rapids, is one of West Michigan's family foundations committed to making a difference in the lives of individuals, families, organizations and communities. Grants are provided to non-profit organizations primarily in West and Northern Michigan for projects that enhance child development, protect natural resources, promote the arts, and build community. You can learn more about the Frey Foundation and its history at www.freyfdn.org.

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